

SACRED POWERS

OR, AN

IMPARTIAL INQUIRY

INTO THE

DOCTRINE

OF THE

Brille Appare
SACRED SCRIPTURES,

AND

ESPECIALLY

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT,

RESPECTING

CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

BY A LOVER OF TRUTH.

Every one that doeth evil hateth the light; but he that doeth truth
cometh to the light.

JESUS CHRIST.

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SACRED FORMS

OF THE

ANGELICAL INQUIRY

IN 1803

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THE

PREFACE.

CHRISTIANS have nothing to do with politics, is an assertion frequently made, but seldom supported: Several weighty reasons have induced me to call it in question. Is it meant that they are not called to engage in this subject, as Christians? This is undoubtedly true: but then there appears to be as much foundation for affirming that Christians have nothing to do with physic, because they are not called to engage in that science as Christians; but as MEN, they are justly engaged in every subject which concerns the welfare of mankind; and their being Christians does not exclude them from any lawful engagements. Are Christians forbidden to intermeddle with politics because there is any moral evil in it? Were this a science of so polluted a nature, that a man could not touch it without contaminating his soul, it would be justly said that Christians should have nothing to do with politics. But where is the moral evil of studying what are the best laws and regulations to secure the virtue and happiness of a community? Is it because this subject is frequently agitated with warmth, splits men into parties, and engrosses their time and attention, that Christians are forbidden to interest themselves in it? That politics may have had these evil effects upon men, is readily granted, and that Christians should endeavour to shun these evils, is also admitted; but then this only proves that Christians should avoid the ABUSE of this science. But is it possible for us to engage in any subject that is not liable to be abused, and to become the occasions of very serious evils? It has been debated, with much heat and asperity, whether the Hebrew language should be read with or without points; but who will say that on this account it is unlawful for Christians to study Hebrew? But we are told that there is something peculiar in politics which occasions party violence and animosity; it particularly touches the prejudices and the interests of men, and requires more than an ordinary share of forbearance and disinterestedness. This is most undoubtedly true, but it is far from answering the purpose for which it is brought forward; for it rather proves that Christians alone should interest themselves in politics, than that they alone should be excluded; because they possess in the

most eminent degree the qualities required. It is urged by some, that Jesus Christ and his Apostles, who stand as examples to us, never engaged in the political questions of their day. Of this we cannot be sure. All we have any certain knowledge of, is, that in the exercise of their public ministry they did not discourse on political subjects; and I sincerely wish that all teachers of religion would follow their example. But Jesus Christ and his Apostles were missionaries, travelling from place to place; had they been settled in any country, it is highly probable, that as citizens of that country, they would have studied its political welfare. But still we are told that politics is an inferior subject, beneath the attention of Christians, who should be engaged in the higher concerns of religion. It is equally true that agriculture and geography are inferior subjects, but is a Christian, on that account, forbidden to cultivate the earth, or to look over a map? But it is not enough to contend that Christians *MAY*, for it is equally true that they *ought* to interest themselves in politics. It is universally acknowledged that a Christian ought to labour for the support of his family, but by all the arguments that support this, it may be proved that he ought also to labour in his degree for the welfare of his country. The object of politics is the well-being of society, and who will say that Christians are not bound to attend to this? Who that knows any thing of Christianity, is ignorant of the peculiar obligations it lays upon us to attend to each other's welfare? Permit me to remind those of my Christian readers, who are sensible of their political duties, that the sacred character of Christian demands of them a more amiable and exalted conduct in their relation in civil life. But a just practice must always be preceded by a right understanding of our duty. Without doubt the authority of Revelation has had considerable influence in forming your political sentiments: But are you right in your views of the Scripture doctrine of government? To assist you in resolving this question is my design in laying before you these sheets. Had I gone more at large into the inquiry, perhaps it might have been more pleasing and satisfactory to many. But it was my design to compress it into the space of a small pamphlet, which is best accommodated to the time, the patience, and the purse of the great majority, which will most effectually serve the interests of mankind, and give me the best claim to the honourable title of

A LOVER OF TRUTH.

SACRED

SACRED POLITICS.

IN passing through the walks of life which Providence has marked out for me, I have sometimes met with occurrences that have informed my judgment, and frequently with such as have awakened my anxious inquiry : One day of my life has become memorable to me, as it was peculiarly fruitful in incidents of the latter kind. I was walking in one of those vacant thoughtless moods, which too frequently beset me, when I was suddenly roused from it, by the noise of two disputants whom I had overtaken. The one was an aged man, who declared his firm attachment to the ancient form of Government under which his forefathers lived, and thought virtue, and veneration for antiquity, could not be separated. He was severely inveighing against another, who affirmed, that inquiry had led him to prefer the more modern forms, which have obtained in America and France : He roundly charged him with opposing the authority of God, and trampling on the precepts of Religion, which commanded him to " Fear God, to honour the King, and not to " meddle with those who are given to change." The angry Democrat seemed startled and chagrined at this attack, and feeling the edge of his antagonist's weapon wound him keenly, he was almost ready to leap into Deism to avoid its stroke. Whilst I was deeply ruminating on this contest, my meditations were broken off by a scene, the perfect contrast of the former ; for here the patron of democracy was the assailant ; he held in his hand the sacred volume, and with triumph in his eyes read aloud the disgraceful origin of Jewish Kings, and their character drawn by Samuel, whom he stiles the democratic judge : It was easy to see that this at once staggered the Aristocrat, and lessened his love,

love, if not his veneration for the Scriptures. These things awakened a spirit of examination in my breast, and considering that both these political parties plead Scripture in support of their opinions, and claim for their favourite forms the honour of divine appointment, I resolved carefully to examine the question---

Whether the sacred Scripture does, or does not, prescribe to us any particular form of Civil Government?

But while I open the sacred volume, blushes cover my face, trembling seizes my nerves; I blush for myself and for all the friends of revelation, to think, that while many have raked up the ashes of Plato and Aristotle, to learn their decision upon the important science of Government, none have been found, till now, to refer to the Law and the Testimony, to know which of the different partizans speak according to their word. It is with trembling steps I enter on the unbeaten path, lest by my passions or my prejudices I should be led astray. Oh thou Father of Lights, beam forth a divine ray upon my mind, that thy precepts, which, to the upright soul appear written with a sun-beam, may be unfolded to my view, and the dictates of thy word be delivered to the world uncontaminated by the channel through which they run! I doubt not that were I entirely ignorant of divine revelation, and my opinion were asked whether I supposed it would give any decision upon the subject before us, I should answer in the negative; for I should reason thus: "Civil Government and Religion are two distinct subjects; and a book may contain a complete system of religion which has not the most distant reference to political government: I should therefore expect that the book of God would content itself with giving us a view of our present duties and future hopes, and leave human governments to human authors." Though it must be confessed that our most profound surmises, concerning what revelation *might* say, have but little weight in them; for the best conjecture we could make upon the subject, is, that a revelation would contain many things which we should never have expected: This is in a great degree exemplified in the inquiry which we are now to pursue, for on searching into the sacred writings, we discover many things relating to civil Government. The chief part is contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

In the dispensation of religion which God gave to the Jews, it appears that he not only laid some restraints upon the civil administration, but absolutely appointed of what kind the Government should be. In all his proceedings with that remarkable people, he shewed an evident determination to keep them under his peculiar care; he treated them as one great family, of which he himself was the parent. Their place of abode, their forms, and place of worship; their food, their dress, their labours, and their recreations were all appointed by God; no wonder then that their form of civil Government was by divine appointment. Moses informs them that God had chosen them to be a special people unto himself above all people upon the face of the earth.

Of what kind then was this Government which God established among the Jews? That it was not a Monarchy is evident; for they lived under it for the space of 400 years before ever Kings made their appearance in Israel, and then the introduction of them is strongly marked as a criminal encroachment on the divine constitution. Neither was it an Aristocracy; for though we read of the Princes of Israel at the departure of that people out of Egypt, yet when they came to be established in Canaan, under the divine constitution, we find no more of their authority. It was not an Aristocracy of *birth*, or a government by hereditary princes; for during the time of the original purity of the Jewish constitution the laws were not administered by the first-born of their tribes, but men of obscure families, and sometimes the youngest son of a family filled the office of Judge; and when these died, it did not descend to their sons. The only instance of hereditary succession to the office of judge of which we read, is condemned as a crime, and stands a blot upon the character of the venerable man by whom it was permitted. An Aristocracy of *wealth* it was not; for the Jewish rulers were far from being the wealthiest men in their tribes. Poverty frequently claimed a nearer kindred to them than riches. It is difficult to give an appropriate name to the Mosaic constitution: It has been called by ecclesiastical writers a THEOCRACY, which signifies a government by God; and this it certainly was. The whole nation was a church, and the five books of Moses, which contained their religious system, contained also their civil code, though the priests had not the execution of the civil laws; that was committed to judges chosen by the people*: All affairs of great exigence were determined by God himself.

* Deut. xvi. 18, 19.

Now to take away the veil of ecclesiastical terms, and view the Government of the Israelites entirely in a civil light, we may call it a **FEDERAL REPUBLIC**, bearing a near resemblance to the United States of America, each Jewish *tribe* answering to an American *state*. Every tribe possessed full power within its own territory, and we frequently find all the men of a tribe meeting together to determine affairs in the simple democratic form of Athens, as their small numbers would admit of that, and they do not appear to have known the representative mode. The place where the Ark stood was the centre of the Union, and there God himself presided King of the whole nation, as Moses says: "and he was King in Jeshurun when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together *."

The Jewish Monarchy now claims our attention. We have already shewn that Kings were not originally appointed by God; how then were they introduced? The nations which surrounded Judea were governed by Kings who were continually either leading their people forth to battle, or dividing the plunder torn from their conquered enemies. Israel was dazzled with the splendour of the diadem of Edom, Moab, and Philistia; grown tired of their own simple form of Government, they sighed after the glory of a King, and the splendid pomp of a court.

War! infernal war! had, we fear, a large share in producing this revolution in the Jewish state. The sons of Israel, corrupt and degenerate, saw with envy the rich spoils which the neighbouring conquerors bore away from the vanquished foe. Feeling that the divine institutions under which they lived were by no means suited to this murderous trade, they raised the cry of treason against the divine constitution, and exclaimed, "Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations, and that our king may go out before us, and fight our battles." Infatuated men! when ye beheld Moab or Philistia returning in triumph, loaded with the rich spoils of gold, silver, and costly apparel, why did ye not turn your eyes to the field from which they reaped those fruits; there to behold the garments rolled in blood, the rending agonies that distort the features of the wounded, and the pale ghastly countenances of the numerous dead? Why did ye not listen to the hideous clash of arms, the rattling of the massy chariots, the stalking of the furious steed, that crushes beneath his iron hoofs the hopes, the pride of some venerable parent?

* Deut. xxxiii. 5.

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Why did ye not open your ears to the dying groans of the slaughtered foe, which harrow up the soul, and form the dreadful bass to complete the chorus of hell? Oh, that ye had gone forth to view the country of the vanquished, and there beheld the blooming daughter and the hoary sire coming out to meet the miserable remains of the routed army! Would to God ye had seen the tender wife darting her piercing eye through the ranks, in impatient search after the husband of her youth; her breast palpitating with dread anxiety, her cheek, robbed of the blush of health, become pale through fear, while with trembling accents she asks his fate! Although struggling with reluctance, they unfold the dreadful secret---He is slain! Petrified with anguish she stands immoveable. The aged parent, who had followed with feeble steps, hears the dreadful sound, and sinks beneath its weight. But the youthful widow awakes from the torpor into which her grief had thrown her; she wakes to remember her misery; tearing her hair, and beating her aching breast, she sends up to the God whom she serves her heaviest curses, and prays him to form them into thunderbolts, and with them to hurl down swift destruction upon the murderers. Ye sons of Israel! had ye, when turning from these scenes of misery, called for the balances of the sanctuary, and poised them with a steady and impartial hand, ye would have found, that when weighed against these accumulated evils, all the richest spoils that war can possibly produce, are lighter than vanity, and worse than nothing.

But they stopped not to ask counsel either at the shrine of reason or religion when they gathered round Samuel their judge, determined to overthrow the divine constitution, and to have a King at all events. The good old man, fearing that their dislike was raised against him, went with sorrow to report their strange demand to Jehovah; but the divine answer relieved his mind; for God says to him, "Hearken unto the voice of the people, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." But to convince them that they would not change their constitution for a better, and that a heavenly King was infinitely preferable than an earthly one, God commanded Samuel to take up the prophetic pencil, and to draw the character of their future Kings. He begins with relating to them the dispositions which their monarch would make for war. "He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots; and he will appoint him captains over

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"thousands, and over fifties, to make his instruments of war. "In peace he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, "cooks, and bakers; he will take your maid-servants, and "your goodliest young men, and put them to his work; he "will take the tenth of your seed, of your vineyards, and "of your sheep unto himself; your fields and your vine- "yards and your olive-yards will he take, even the best of "them, and give them to his servants." And thus Samuel concludes his warning, and ye shall cry out in that day because of your King which ye have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day *. Gloomy prophecy! but not more gloomy than its fulfilment.

The Israelites unintimidated by these awful warnings, still continued to cry out, "Nay but we will have a King;" and God seeing them obstinately bent upon it, *permitted* it. But to shew them that he gave them a King in his anger, soon after the day of election, when the people were called together to hear Samuel's last address, God gave a visible token of his displeasure. Though it was the season of wheat harvest, when they enjoyed constant serenity; the heavens lowered and grew black, dreadful thunders rolled above, the skies poured down torrents of rain, which threatened to destroy their future harvest, and caused them humbly to confess their guilt, saying, "We have added to all our sins this evil to ask "us a King."

But the God of mercy did not cast off the Jews from being his people, although they had cast off him as their King. It was the original appointment that God himself should reign King in Israel, yet as they had determined to have Kings like the nations around, God interposed in the appointment of them, that their Kings might reign under him, and thus the Theocracy be still kept up in a degree. It appears to be for this reason that the Kings of Israel were called the Lord's anointed, and that the pious Jew dreaded to put forth his hand to touch the Lord's anointed, because God still maintained the sovereign authority in Israel; he appointed the Kings, and to remove them without his authority would be treason against God himself. It is with regard to this also, that David is called "the man after God's own heart;" the sovereign choice was peculiarly discovered in placing him on the throne, and when on the throne he appeared more in character of God's vicegerent, by a remarkable zeal for the Theocracy which he discovered on all occasions. By search-

* Samuel viii. 10—18.

ing the Scriptures we shall find, that whenever David is called the man after God's own heart, it is entirely with respect to the divine choice of him as King over Israel. From all these things it appears to be particularly a *Jewish* precept, "Fear God and the King, and meddle not with those that are given to change."

I shall not now follow the political history of the Jews down to the destruction of their Monarchy, and their return from slavery in Babylon, till the ruin of their state by the Romans; because whatever was good in their government during those periods, was virtually contained in the Mosaic constitution, which we have already examined; and whatever was different from that divine constitution, was their crime, and not worthy our notice. But although from strict inquiry we are constrained to acknowledge the democratic nature of the constitution which God framed for the Jews; though we must confess the extreme reluctance with which God suffered them to have a King, and the marks of anger which attended his election, and from all these things must admit that the strain of the Old Testament runs in favour of Democracy; yet let not the patron of Democracy pretend that his favourite mode of government can plead divine right; for none of all these things affect the *present* time, except the New Testament give some decision. The peculiarities of the Jewish polity neither could, nor were designed to be extended to other nations; but Christians do not believe that they are *now* binding even upon the descendents of Abraham; we consider them abolished at the coming of Jesus the Messiah, and that he broke down the middle wall of partition which separated Jews and Gentiles, so that there is now "no more Jew nor Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." So that he who seeks to establish a democracy now because God originally established that form among the Jews; he that preaches the divine right of Kings, and declares their persons to be inviolable, because David was the Lord's anointed; and he that would have set up a High Priest of the family of Aaron, because Israel had one, all rank equally high in the scale of folly, and stand equally far from the point of truth. But I hasten to resolve the original question, from the doctrine of the NEW TESTAMENT.

On entering this field, at the first glance we perceive that there is less to be met with on the subject of civil government than in the Old Testament: the number of the precepts scattered here and there is so small, as to lead us strongly to

suspect that the subject is here left undetermined. That the New Testament does contain some passages that have a political relation cannot be denied, although their number be small: my business is now to decide whether these are of such a nature as to dignify any particular form of government with the title of A DIVINE INSTITUTION; and thus positively to prescribe the political conduct of all those who love and revere the sacred writings. Few I suppose will dissent from me, when I observe that since the passages that relate to civil government are but few, these ought to be unequivocally decided, in order to answer such important purposes. I shall now extract all those passages of the New Testament that have a political relation, beginning with the Gospels.

It is a little remarkable, that in all the four Evangelists there is but one passage which prescribes any political duty, and this is given by the three former in nearly the same words, "*Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.*" To examine the connection in which a passage of scripture stands, is one of the first means we are to use in order to discover its design; and an argument that derives its weight from the general scope and connection of a passage, must always be allowed to possess considerable force. He that refuses to admit of this argument, but breaks off a text from its connection, to draw a particular meaning from it in this unconnected state, is either weak, and ignorant of the nature of the scripture, or (which is more probable) wicked, and has some party purpose to serve by it.

Now to proceed to the consideration of this passage in the Gospel. Luke informs us that Jesus had been delivering some parables, which with the keen edge of truth wounded the guilty consciences of the Pharisees, who always disliked him, but were now raised to an extreme pitch of hatred against him. They resolved either to ruin his credit with the people, or to expose him to the stroke of the Roman sword, that either way they might prevent him from continuing to unmask their hypocrisy. They sent forth some Pharisees together with the Herodians, that they might catch him in his words. With deep-laid craft these men proposed to him a question, in answering which, they concluded he must infallibly be caught by one or other of them: it was concerning the tribute which the Romans had exacted from the Jews. The Herodians were the time-serving tools of Herod, the Roman governor; they maintained that the Jews ought to submit,

submit, and pay the tribute in question, for which they were hated by the people. The Pharisees were strenuous supporters of the Jewish independency, pretended great attachment to the law of Moses, and insisted that it was not lawful to pay tribute, for which they stood high in the popular esteem. These two parties, though at a great variance among themselves, join together to ensnare Jesus; for hell will always coalesce to oppose heaven. They say unto him, "Master, what thinkest thou, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, or not?" Now, says the Herodian within himself, if he shall reply, No, it is not lawful; then I will accuse him to the Romans, as one that denies their authority, a preacher of sedition, and thus he will be apprehended. The Pharisees say, if he shall answer, Yes, pay the tribute; we will say to the people, "Behold here your new prophet, whom you almost thought was the Messiah come to deliver you from bondage, endeavours to rivet your chains, and preaches passive obedience to the usurpation of the Romans." What answer then will Jesus give to this crafty question? Why certainly not such an one as will suffer either party to gain their ends. But yet, strange to tell! the answer he gave has often since been quoted, as a command to yield implicit obedience to all the commands of those who are in power: as if because Jesus said, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, therefore we are to render to Cæsar every thing he requires of us. It is certain that if either the Pharisees or the people had understood him so, the one having exactly gained their ends, would have triumphed over him, and the other would have despised and hated him. But Jesus gave no such slavish precept, neither did he return an answer, of which either party could take hold; but escaped them both by declining the question in a manner worthy of himself. He dismissed them with inculcating the broad rule of justice, *Give to every one his due*. So that when Jesus said, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, nothing more was meant, than give to Cæsar what you ought to give him. Thus the people understood him, for they still continued to love and revere him; and thus it is evident both Pharisees and Herodians understood him, for, completely chagrined at his having escaped their share, they went away, and from that day durst ask no more questions.

Some may object that Jesus came to be our teacher, and we may expect that he will instruct us in our duty, with regard to this point. I answer, that Jesus came to be our teacher

teacher is true, but it was to teach us the knowledge of God, and of those truths necessary to our acceptance with him; he came to lead men to heaven, and he was not to be stopped in his career, by the little squabbles that relate only to earth.

If it be objected, that to say Jesus declined giving an answer to this question is charging him with a meanness unworthy of him; I would reply, that not only our own reason, but other examples of Christ's conduct, prove that it is not unworthy of him. I refer to the instance of the woman taken in adultery*, where the conduct of our Lord, is in many respects similar to his behaviour in this affair of the tribute money. If we refuse to allow that he declined answering the original question, when he said to the woman, "Neither do I condemn thee," we must flatly assert that he sanctioned adultery; but from such a supposition we turn away with abhorrence. The Pharisees in this instance also sought to draw Christ into a snare; they wished him to take upon him a judicial authority, that they might accuse him to the Romans. When they brought the woman, and asked him to give judgment upon her, he at first received them with silence; when they continued to press him to give judgment, he cried aloud, "Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone at her." He then stooped down, while all the Scribes and Pharisees, convicted by their own consciences, went away. Jesus raising himself up, and seeing only the woman before him, said to her, "Woman, where are these thine accusers, hath no man condemned thee?" she saith, "No man, Lord;" then said Jesus, "Neither do I condemn thee, go thy way, sin no more." When Christ asked the woman, "hath no man condemned thee?" he certainly spoke, and she certainly spoke, and she certainly understood him to speak of a legal and judicial condemnation; otherwise her answer, No man, Lord, was not true; in every other sense of condemnation, as censure, reproof, private judgment, every one who brought her there had condemned her. Therefore when Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee," he certainly meant, it is not my business to pronounce or to execute the sentence of the law; and when he said, Go thy way, sin no more, he in effect told her she had sinned already. As it is evident Jesus here, avoided answering the original question, and equally evident to every virtuous mind that he by no means sanctioned adultery; so all the arguments that prove this, will equally prove

* John viii. 3.

that when he said, *Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, he gave no decision upon the subject, but only gave a general precept of equity. He that will maintain that Jesus here commanded us to yield implicit obedience to all the mandates of any existing authority, must be contended to admit, that in the other case we have cited he allowed adultery. But save me, Oh Jesus, from dishonouring thee by holding either of these opinions!

It is true that some interpreters of scripture, who in general deserve great deference, have given another turn to the answer of Jesus, "*Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.*" But if in other parts of the scripture they have been very exact in giving the just meaning, it does not prove that they have also in this. Is it not high time to shake off the last vestige of Popery, to examine all things for ourselves, and to yield implicit confidence and assent to no man? We will now consider the meaning that is given by some to the passage in dispute. When the Pharisees asked the decision of Christ, he said, "*Why tempt ye me? shew me the tribute money;*" they brought unto him a penny; then said he, whose image and superscription is this? they say unto him, *Cæsar's*. Jesus replied, *Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*; by which commentators have understood Jesus to argue thus, "*by receiving Cæsar's money you acknowledge the Roman Government, and therefore you ought to pay tribute to it.*" Admitting this to have been his meaning, though I think the former arguments I have advanced incontestibly prove it was not, yet when this is admitted, it can prove nothing more, than that Jesus declared we ought to yield a certain portion of our property to the support of the Government under which we live. And who will deny that this is a precept both just and reasonable? This passage then proves nothing in favour of any particular mode or form of Civil Government, because the precept of rendering support, will equally apply to all the different forms of government that can be established in the world. Having considered the Gospels, the Epistles now demand our attention.

Paul's Epistle to the Romans contains an important passage on the subject under consideration; it is in the thirteenth chapter, and runs through the seven first verses. "*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers which be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall*"

" receive

" receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a
 " terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then
 " not be afraid of the power; do that which is good, and
 " thou shalt have praise for the same: for he is the minister
 " of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is
 " evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for
 " he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath
 " upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be
 " subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.
 " For this cause pay ye tribute also, for they are God's mi-
 " nisters attending continually upon this very thing. Ren-
 " der therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is
 " due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour
 " to whom honour."

From a close attention to the whole of this passage from
 other particular passages, and from the whole strain of scrip-
 ture in general; I am decidedly of opinion, that whatever
 the Apostle here says is concerning Civil Government in the
 abstract view of it, without any regard to the various modes
 and forms of which it is susceptible: so that when he affirms
 that the powers that be are ordained of God, and that who-
 soever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God;
 he simply means, that God has ordained that men should not
 live like bears and wolves in a wood without law or rule, but
 that civil authority is the ordinance of God. To prove this,
 the Apostle goes on to describe the ends for which God has
 established Civil Government in the earth; and these are ends
 worthy of a God--That terror might deter the evil worker,
 and praise reward the good. When Paul says, Rulers are
 not a terror to good works but to the evil; when he affirms,
 that if men do good, they shall have praise of the power;
 when he calls it the minister of God to us for good, and a
 revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil, who can
 doubt but he is speaking of civil institutions in general? Who
 can for a moment imagine, that by *the powers that be*, Paul
 means the then existing authorities of Rome, to which he
 particularly writes? Could he be thought by the Christian
 Romans to mean the powers that they were under? Surely
 they could never imagine the description the Apostle gives
 to have been a picture of their Nero or Caligula; neither can
 we suppose them to be meant by this description, unless it
 were by a master-stroke of irony; but without doubt the
 Apostle looks at these debauched blood-thirsty monsters with
 too much horror to be greatly disposed to irony. When
 Paul had given an account of the design of civil establish-
 ments

ments, which was to protect and reward virtue, and to repress and punish vice, he draws this conclusion, that he that resisteth shall receive to himself damnation, or condemnation; and surely he that resisteth such an wholesome institution will richly deserve condemnation from both God and man. Thus when he had pointed out the necessity and excellence of Civil Government, and reminded us that God had ordained its existence in the earth, the Apostle lays it down as our duty to pay tribute. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. And what reasonable man will deny, that if certain persons attend continually upon our concerns, and employ all their time and talents to promote our welfare, they ought to be paid for it.

A valuable illustration of the whole passage may be derived from an attention to the time and people for which it was originally written. At this period the Gospel was making its entrance into the world, and Christians firmly believed that it would make a rapid progress, and spread extensively through the earth, as the event proved. Rome, to which this Epistle was sent, was at that time under the dominion of some of the most infamous of the human race. The Christians then in Rome might naturally be inclined to say, "That Gospel which we have lately received, and which has had such powerful effects upon the temper of our souls, is spreading through the world; surely God is now about to place righteousness on the throne; to give the dominion out of the hands of those who hate him, unto his servants and friends; can it be right in us to pay tribute towards supporting in vice those who now bear rule?" We know that such thoughts have entered the minds of men in latter times, who imagined that dominion was founded in grace, and that the man of the greatest piety had the greatest claim to civil authority. To extinguish such false and dangerous, though plausible opinions, the Apostle says to the Romans, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers;" Think not of casting off your obedience to them. "The powers that be are ordained of God;" that is, the present civil authority which is established in the earth without any connection with the church.

Such a view of the passage accounts for the fifth verse, "Therefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath but for conscience sake." Ye are not to submit to civil authority merely because ye have not power to resist, and are afraid of the vengeance that will follow disobedience, but

ye are to be subject for conscience sake; knowing that civil authority, entirely unconnected with any consideration of religion, is God's ordinance, and therefore obedience to it is your duty.

From the whole it is evident that this passage of the New Testament does not favour any particular form of government. It contains nothing in favour of Monarchy; because Kings are not mentioned in it. If any should imagine that Kings are meant, because Paul speaks in the singular, and says *he* is the minister of God for good, and *he* beareth not the sword in vain, I would remind them that the Apostle refers to the proceeding word *power*, and merely personifies it; so that this minister of God cannot exclusively mean Kings, unless Kings alone have power. Neither can this passage be pressed into the service of any other form of government, because it will equally apply to any government that is a terror to vice, and a reward to virtue, and such government alone have reason to glory in it*.

The next passage of a political relation with which we meet, is in the Epistle by Paul to Timothy, the four first verses of the second chapter. "I exhort therefore that the
 " first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving
 " of thanks be made for all men; for Kings and for all that
 " are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable
 " life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and ac-
 " ceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all
 " men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the
 " truth." From the conclusion of this passage, we learn what are the blessings which we are to implore for Kings and for all that are in authority---that they may be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. This Apostle had often declared, that not many mighty, not many noble, were called to a true acquaintance with the Gospel; but that God had

* Though I am convinced it is not strictly pursuing the subject, yet I cannot help expressing my surprize and indignation at the frequent perversion of this passage. Because the Apostle says, he that resisteth shall receive condemnation, his words have been abused to enforce passive obedience to every despotic measure. But who is there that has the effrontery to affirm that because the scripture forbids me oppose one who is the minister of God for good, therefore I must silently submit to the tyrant who is the minister of Satan for evil? Surely the friends of tyranny and the preachers of passive obedience must have felt themselves sorely in want of scriptural support, when they fled to a passage that describes the administration of virtue and justice in order to enforce submission to a government of vice and oppression. As well might they have said, "the scripture commands you to listen to the man who would lead you in the right path, and therefore you must not turn away from him who would plunge you down a precipice."

chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom; but lest Christians should think that rich men and Kings were excluded from salvation, and thus from their prayers, they are here directed to pray for all men, Kings included: because this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. It may be objected, that we are commanded to pray for Kings and those in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Well, grant it so; what can be more effectual to procure for the people a quiet and peaceable life, than to bring their rulers to the knowledge of the truth, that is, to make them true Christians? For he that possesses the mild and peaceable spirit of a Christian must be strongly inclined to promote peace in the world: and as for godliness and honesty, he that does not strictly practise them himself, and diligently promote them in others, is no Christian, whatever his profession may be.

Some of the advocates for a Monarchical government pretend that this part of scripture speaks in favour of the continuance of Kings; because if there be none, they cannot be prayed for. But if this precept enjoin the continuance of Kings where they are, it equally enjoins the setting of them up where they are not. And I suppose few will be inclined, upon the strength of this text, to go to America, and there contend for establishing a King, that they might obey the divine command, by praying for him. But an impartial eye will easily perceive, that the Apostle lays no such peculiar emphasis on Kings; but the precept is, indiscriminately for Kings and all that are in authority, that is, civil rulers of whatever kind they may be. This, as well as all other precepts of the sacred volume, recommends itself to sound reason; for what can be more reasonable, than to have a peculiar concern for the interest of those who are in situations peculiarly important, and which demand especial wisdom and fortitude?

The Epistle to Titus contains the next passage of political tendency: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." But I shall not insult my reader's understanding, by taking pains to prove that the Apostle here speaks of Civil Government simply considered, without any regard to its various modifications. I only observe that it is very similar to that part of the thirteenth chapter of the

Epistle to the Romans, which I have already considered, and that it affords a good illustration of it.

The Epistle of Peter furnishes the last subject of investigation. The second chapter contains these words, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the King as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him; for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well *." "Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the King †." In the first place, I would remark, that the divine right of Kings, or of any rulers, cannot be proved from this text; because they are expressly called the ordinance of man. If we attend closely to the language of Peter here, we shall find it so very similar to that of Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, as to convince us that they both speak of the same thing. Peter, as well as Paul, enforces obedience to civil institutions from a consideration of the good design of them---they are for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. Only Peter goes a step farther, and recommends obedience to the civil authority in whatever form it may exist, whether in that of Kings, or of Deputy Governors. We are directed by Paul to render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour: and in this Epistle, Peter instructs us more particularly in the same duties, "Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the King." It is observable here, that Christians are directed to honour all men, as well as Kings; though by Kings being particularly mentioned, we may fairly conclude that some peculiar honour is intended to be given them. The Apostle points out the different affections of mind with which we are to regard all those to whom we are related. We are to honour all men, according as their various excellencies in society make them worthy of it: the brotherhood or our fellow Christians, as they are servants and friends of the same God, and disciples of the same Saviour, should engage our affection; love the brotherhood: considering the infinite dignity of God, his righteous and supreme authority, we are to reverence and fear him: since Kings and Governors are the ordinance of man for the execution of the laws of Society, and she has thought them worthy to be invested with that honourable office; therefore, according to the divine command of rendering to whom honour is due, we are to honour the

* Verses 13, 14.

† Verse 17.

King. And any tolerable degree of good conduct in the office, will always secure to a King the honour of the virtuous and thinking mind.

But let us not forget that this text of scripture merely commands us to honour the ruler who is the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well. When a man, though he may retain the name of King, becomes profligate and vicious, tyrannical and bloodthirsty, he is no longer what the Apostle describes by that name, the ordinance of man, for the execution of the laws, and the protection and encouragement of virtue; no, he is the plague and detestation of man, the destruction of the laws, and the ruin of virtue; consequently the character being changed, our duty is changed, and it is now as much incumbent upon us to detest this man, as it formerly was to honour him. Let us, in the name of truth and reason, recollect that the scripture commands us to honour those only to whom honour is due. God never can, he never does command us to do any thing that is either impossible or unreasonable; and that it is not only unreasonable, but absolutely impossible to honour a debauchee, a tyrant, or a murderer, is too evident to need proof*.

Thus have we gone through all those passages of the New Testament which contain either doctrines or precepts of a political relation; and notwithstanding all that ignorance or craft have done, in order to shrowd them in darkness, by their own native light and evidence we have been guided by this conclusion,

That the New Testament does not prescribe or sanction any particular form of Civil Government.

It is now in vain for one to contend for a Democracy in which the people rule without a King; because such a government was originally appointed amongst the Jews: And equally in vain for another to plead in behalf of Monarchy; because Kings reigned in Israel, and were called the Lord's anointed. To be sure, of two bad causes, the former has the best; because he

* It may not be an improper appendix to the explanation of these texts, to remark that in the language of the scriptures, as well in present use, the word King, frequently means nothing more nor less than Civil Government; in proof of which I adduce the 6th verse of the 17th chapter of the book of Judges. "In those days there was no King in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Here it is evident, that by a King is meant Government in general, because it was for want of this that every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Things were not in this confused disordered state all the time they had no kings, but during the administration of Samuel and others of the Judges, the laws were strictly and impartially executed.

may plead higher antiquity in favour of Democracy, and contend that it was first established by God himself, that the introduction of Kings is considered as a criminal breach of God's law, and a standing proof of the guilt and obstinacy of the Jewish nation. But neither the one nor the other have truth on their side, when they contend that their favourite form of government ought to be established in the present day, because they imagine the Old Testament favours it. The decision of the Old Testament on this subject, is of no consequence to us, unless that decision were confirmed by the New Testament. But if we would open our eyes to see it, the New Testament, in its general scope, and in several express passages, has made it evident that all the peculiarities of the Jewish state, whether civil or religious, are now abolished. In Christ the throne of David was translated to the heights of heaven, and all the sons of Aaron and their sacrifices vanished, when Jesus offered up himself as an atonement for the sins of the world. All that we have now to do with the civil government of Israel, is to profit by the example it affords us, learn its excellencies and defects, and make a better if we can. The New Testament gives no more directions concerning civil government, than to point out the necessity and design of it, lay down the principles of justice upon which it should be founded, and then enforce support and obedience to it. From a review of the whole, we may safely challenge all whom interest or partiality may prompt to the work, to come forward, and prove, if they can, that the sacred scripture enjoins either Monarchy, Aristocracy, or Democracy. And thus have we discovered, what we might naturally have expected, that God, in the volume of revelation, holds forth to us a sacred torch, which, though it casts some rays of light around on many other subjects, is intended chiefly to guide the erring steps of the sons of men into that path which leads to eternal bliss.

Although it appear that revelation does not interpose its authority absolutely to appoint any particular form of government, it will be exceedingly serviceable, in order to complete our investigation of the subject, to inquire,

To what kind of Government the Scriptures most incline?

If there be in the world several governments established, differing widely in their foundation, their principles, and their tendency; some being founded upon conquests, others

on consent; some on reason, and others on superstition; the principles of one being equity and justice, while others have no principles, but are actuated by fraud and force; one having an evident and powerful tendency to promote virtue and religion, while others have as strong a tendency to destroy them; is it not highly reasonable to conclude that the volume of divine inspiration will, in its general strain, or legitimate consequences, incline in favour of one or other of them?

Before we proceed to a more particular examination, it is necessary to observe two things. First, The scriptures lay down, with the clearness of light, the grand inviolable principles of truth and justice; and with the authority of Jehovah, apply them to all persons, things, times, and circumstances; consequently, that government which in principle and practice has the greatest regard to truth and justice, has the highest claim to divine approbation, as conveyed in the scriptures. Second, The sacred writings give the fullest and most satisfactory account of the moral government of God, which is a government of justice and benevolence; they hold it up to our view, and propose it to our imitation; so that the scriptures are most decidedly in favour of that government which is most like God's. But I proceed to inquire, in a more particular manner, to what form of government the scripture inclines.

With respect to the Old Testament, we have already in a great degree anticipated the question; but still there remain some things necessary to be considered. In addition to the leading argument in favour of a democratic government, drawn from the original appointment of God, and the displeasure with which he suffered the introduction of Kings; it has also been urged, that through the whole of the Old Testament, God speaks with greater respect and approbation of the government by the Judges, than of the Monarchy afterwards established. In the prophecies of Isaiah, where God is promising to raise Israel from the ruin into which his sins had cast him, amongst other things, he says, "And I will restore thy Judges as at the first*;" strongly indicating, that the restoration of the ancient Judges would be a valuable blessing. Of a similar tendency to the foregoing, is a passage in the book of Kings. Speaking of the passover, one of the greatest rites of the Jewish œconomy, Josiah is related to have celebrated this feast in a remarkably pious and solemn manner; and the sacred writer observes, "Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the Judges that judged Israel,

* Chap. i. 46.

“ nor in all the days of the Kings of Israel, nor of the Kings of Judah *.” We should have imagined that in the days of some of the Kings, and especially of David, the Jews attended to their religion with the greatest strictness ; but we are forbidden by the faithful record of the men of God, who assure us that in the time of the Judges, and not of the Kings, religion was most regarded. Many years after the reign of Saul, God, by the prophet Hosea, reminds the Israelites, that he gave them a King in his wrath, and took him away in his anger. Through all the prophetic books, we shall find that whenever inspired men were sent to denounce judgments against Israel or Judah, the Kings and Princes had the first and the heaviest share. Though all these things cannot possibly prove that we are now forbidden to have Kings, yet they have been urged by some, as forcible reasons why we should be unwilling to admit them, and rather prefer the democratic mode of government, which the Old Testament so strongly favours.

The advocates for a monarchical government have pleaded that the scriptures proclaim the great glory of the reigns of David and Solomon. This is much to be questioned. It is true that the scriptures speak of a vast accumulation of gold and silver, of horses and of chariots during the reigns of these Princes ; but it is the weakness and vanity of our minds, and not the scripture, that has attached the glory to them. The sacred writers simply relate that these things were so, and leave us by other parts of scripture to determine in what light they are to be viewed. Had our minds been more enlightened by the pure rays of revelation, we should have seen no glory in these things ; for in other parts of scripture they are condemned, and are among those stains in the characters of good men, which the pen of inspiration so faithfully records. Others have imagined that the Old Testament inclines in favour of Monarchy, because of some prophecies that relate to the future state of the church. Isaiah says of Zion, “ And Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their “ Queens thy nursing mothers †.” Now it is asked, How are Kings thus to foster and guard the church, if there be none ? But it may be answered, That if we insist thus on the existence of Kings, we ought equally to plead for their Queens ; for they also are mentioned in the prophecy, and so we must believe, that in the time of the church’s prosperity, there will be no royal bachelors or widowers. But let us for ever discard this unworthy practice of straining the words

* 2 Kings, xxiii. 72.

† Isaiah, xlix. 23.

of scripture, to serve a purpose. Nothing more can fairly be inferred from these words, than that during the time of the great glory and felicity of the church, the governments of the world shall be most highly favourable towards religion. I hesitate not to say, that I firmly believe this prophecy to be now fulfilled in the Government of America. That Government is the first that ever has existed in the world, since the Gospel was preached, which has acted as it ought towards religion. It has done for religion, all that true religion asks Civil Government to do for it, which is to let it alone. All other Governments have been to Christianity, either a dagger, a chain, or a clog. They have either stabbed it with persecution, fettered it by a connection with the state, or sunk it to the ground by a load of pretended favours; and never have they been greater enemies to religion, than when they have killed it with kindness.

The New Testament now awaits our investigation, to discover to what kind of Government it gives the honour of its preference. Let us consider how it teaches us to look upon men in general. It first takes us by the hand, and leads us to the garden of Paradise, points us to our great progenitor, and reminds us, that God has made of one blood all nations dwelling upon the face of the earth; and that we are all children of one great family. It then bears us on the wing, and mounting aloft, places us by the eternal throne of God: looking down from thence, we find that all the lofty dignities of titles, wealth, or power, have vanished, and we see all the sons of men sunk to the level of creatures; all equally subject to the divine Government, and equally dependent upon the bounty of him, with whom there is no respect of persons. It teaches us that no flesh can glory in the divine presence; but as all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, so all must be indebted to the sovereign grace of the Redeemer for their restoration. That Government which most accords with these impartial views of man, best agrees with Christian scriptures.

How does the New Testament teach us to *esteem* men? Not as rich and poor, high and low. Esteeming men for such things as riches and titles of honour, is by the sacred writers called, "respect of persons," and under that name is severely condemned. Thus James addresses Christians, "My Brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man, in vile rai-

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"ment;

“ment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place, and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors*.” Through the whole of the New Testament, the poor are spoken of with the highest respect, and in no place is the mere possession of wealth considered sufficient to entitle a man to esteem. This is the place, where wealth and power cannot profit the vicious man, and where poverty is no blot upon the character of the virtuous. It is to the good qualities of the soul that the scriptures attach esteem. That man who does not esteem, love, and venerate a pure and humble believer in Jesus, though clothed in rags, more than a wealthy Nabob destitute of virtue, is no Christian; though he might redden with anger if he were denied the name. From these things we must readily admit, that the New Testament inclines strongly in favour of that Government, whatever may be its name and form, in which the poor are taken from the back ground of forgetfulness and contempt, and brought forward to be held up to view as important and respectable; where virtues, and not riches, place the laurel on the brow. And that Government which casts contempt upon the poor, and neglects the virtuous, has the greatest reason to dread being tried by the touchstone of revelation†.

The man in whose heart are enstamped the heavenly precepts of the Gospel, and who lays a just claim to the honourable name of Christian, has been brought to a thinking turn of mind. The existence, character, and government of God; the doctrines and precepts of the scripture; the temper and workings of his own heart; the state of man in the world; and the prospects of futurity; are all subjects that engage the

* James, ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 9.

† Governments of oppression are as contrary to the spirit and dictates of the scripture, as light to darkness, or as heaven to hell. Both the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Apostles of the New, join in thundering out the heaviest condemnation against those who oppress the poor. “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him at safety, from him that puffeth at him.” “The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the Princes thereof; for the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord of hosts.” “Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries, that shall come upon you. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped, entered into the ears of the Lords of hosts.”

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constant attention of this man : and he is never more in the character of a Christian, that when he is in a state of mental exertion upon some worthy and important subject. Since Christianity teaches her disciples to reason closely upon the right and the wrong, the good and the bad of every thing; that Government has most reason to glory in her approbation, which will most freely admit of this investigation. The man who has been used to examine the Government of God, brings something of the same spirit of examination into the Governments of men; and unless he be imposed upon by deceit, will immediately condemn every thing contrary to virtue, justice, and benevolence. From these things it is so obvious, as scarcely to need being mentioned, that Christianity casts contempt upon a bigotted adherence to *precedent*; because an implicit compliance with the precedents which our forefathers have established, at once stifles the breath of inquiry, and puts out the eyes of examination. There is an end to all that investigation which the New Testament so much encourages, when once we deem it sufficient to say, "Thus our forefathers acted." Christianity made its way into the world by a continued opposition to precedent. It told men, that it was not sufficient to profess that religion which had been handed down to them by their ancestors, although it had been matured by the wisdom and experience of many preceding generations. Every new convert to the cause of Christ, by forsaking the religion of his forefathers, declared it to be his opinion, that principles were none the better for being old. Peter esteemed it an honour to Christians, to remind them, that "They were redeemed from their vain conversation, received by tradition from their forefathers."

Another effect which the Gospel has upon the heart into which it enters, is to inspire a hatred and contempt for slavery, and a love and veneration for liberty. It blows the trumpet of Jubilee through the earth, whose silver sounds proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those who are bound with the fetters of darkness. It is true, this is entirely spiritual, and regards only the soul of man; but it should not, on that account, be thought to have nothing to do with our subject. This language of the New Testament begets a certain turn of mind in the true Christian; it teaches him to look upon slavery as something base and shameful, and to consider liberty as something good in itself, and worthy to be esteemed. This will have a strong, though silent effect upon his disposition towards other things; and

he will always feel a Government of freedom more congenial with his spirit, than the fetters of despotism *.

What Government is most favourable to Christianity? The infidel will reply, "A Monarchy, without doubt; for "Priests and Kings must go hand in hand." Be it so. Christianity knows no Priests, except, as the New Testament says, all the disciples of Jesus are Priests, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. But as to any particular order of men, who preside independent of the people's choice, are supported without their good-will, and who assume a dominion over the understanding and conscience, they no more belong to Christianity than do the Brahmins of Hindostan. The Christian Church has Ministers, or Pastors over particular societies; but these are no more contrary to the spirit of a thorough Democracy, than lecturers on mathematics or philosophy. That Government has most reason to glory in the approbation of the New Testament, and is most favourable to Christianity, which avoids any connection between Church and State. My kingdom, says the divine author of our religion, is not of this world. There is a certain something in the religion of Christ (which, by the way, may be ranked among the evidences, for its divinity), that it is remarkably unfavourable to a State connection. Whenever the sacred flood has been turned into this channel, it has always stopped its course, and, forsaking the golden soil of an establishment, has broken from under ground, and perhaps branded with the name of some despised sect. It is the pride and the glory of true religion, to pass through the world without defiling itself with the dust of the earth; but to connect it with the State, is, to use the expressive language of the scripture, loading it with thick clay, which offends its purity, and impedes the progress of it to the land of bliss.

Of what kind would a Government be, if formed after the model of the Christian Church? Whenever I speak of Christians, or Christianity, I wish to be understood, as speaking of such as are described in the New Testament: and by the Christian Church, I mean a Church formed according to scriptural directions, and not after the decrees of councils and fathers. Popes, Councils, and Emperors, have busied themselves in erecting an edifice, which they have

* Paul says in one of his Epistles, "Art thou called being a servant? care not for it." But this does not controvert my assertion; for it is evident, from the connection in which the verse stands, that the Apostle means, "Let it not be a matter of over anxious concern: the blessings you receive by the Gospel, greatly outweigh the evils of servitude."

called Christian, but which was no more like to the temple of Christianity, than the Caaba of Mahomet. Now when I speak of a Government formed after the model of the Christian Church, my readers will not expect me to plead for an Emperor, to answer to the Pope; or for a lordly nobility, to correspond with the modern things called Bishops. The different names given to the Ministers of the Christian Church, have been a matter of much dispute, and much more than it was worth: if we forget the names, and search for things, we shall not find in the New Testament those gradations of honour and authority, which some would have us believe to be the institutions of Christ. The different appellations of Minister, Deacon, Presbyter, Pastor, convey no idea of priestly authority, but rather intimate subordination to the people. Even the Apostles, who were appointed in an extraordinary manner by Christ himself, aspired to no higher honour than to be "the servants of all men for Jesus' sake;" according to the precept of Christ, "He that would be the greatest among you, let him be your servant." It was a well known maxim in the primitive Christian Church, *vox populi, vox dei*; so that the people's choice was the Bishop's presentation; their esteem, his authority; their affection, his support; their salvation, his crown; for mitres and tythes are no part of Christianity. From these premises, which are derived from the scriptures, we conclude, that if a Civil Government were to take its form from the Christian Church, no man would be acknowledged as the supreme head; hereditary authority would be unknown; there would be no power or authority independent of the people; honour never would be attached to titles or wealth; and purity of heart, appearing in uprightness of conduct, would be the only object of esteem.

It may be brought forward, as an objection to this democratic view of things, that the Christian Church has a King; that Jesus reigns upon the hill of Zion. But this is not the smallest objection; for the regal authority of Jesus is essentially different from that among men. Jesus has infinitely more strength, wisdom, and goodness, than all his subjects put together; and therefore has a reasonable claim to supreme authority. It is much to our advantage that he should reign, for he is not supported at our expence, but we at his; the blessings of redemption which we receive from him are so great, that gratitude and affection should seat him on the throne. But all this can afford no shadow of reason why we should place upon the throne, one to whom we are under

no obligations, who is a creature feeble and ignorant like ourselves, who must be supported by our labour, and defended by our courage.

Having considered the Church of Christ at large, let us now view the complexion of an individual Christian Assembly. As we approach the sacred place, we are struck with the simplicity of the building; for utility, and not pomp, is the order of its architecture. We remark, the poor man on entering lays aside his poverty, which bowed him to the ground, and when he steps within the sacred threshold, we see him rise to the honourable rank of BROTHER. Crowns and scepters, ribbons and stars, are all thrown in a promiscuous heap before the porch; for Emperors have here no higher dignity than that of believers in Jesus, and brethren of the saints. As we enter, we observe that the strong pillars which support the dome, have each their several inscriptions written on tables of brass. On one we read, **UNITY**, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus;" on another, **FRATERNITY**, "All ye are brethren;" on a third, **LIBERTY**, "Christ hath made you free;" a fourth has inscribed on it, **EQUALITY**, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." We discover one presiding in the assembly, but he is their minister or servant; not called to the office for his wealth or dignity, but for his wise and zealous attachment to the Saviour whom they serve. It is true he delivers to them their rule of faith and obedience; but they are not the notions of his own brain, to which he demands their assent, but the dictates of the divine word, to which he is equally bound to give his own assent; and the precepts which he inculcates upon them, lay with as great, and even greater weight upon himself. The whole assembly now joins in raising to the skies the praises of their redeeming Lord, and every soul feels himself equally bound to aid the general harmony. But if an intercourse with a perverse world has fastened in the breast of any a notion of superiority over his brethren, such ideas are swept away as by an overpowering deluge, when the assembled worshippers bow before the eternal throne of God; for here they all sink to the level of suppliants; all join in the same confession of apostacy; and all acknowledge the same obligations to divine mercy and beneficence. As all equally feel the leveling influence of confession and prayer, so are all alike exalted in the engagements of adoration and praise. The man whose lofty soul holds with tenacious grasp the little distinctions of birth or fortune, beholds at a distance this noble scene;

scene; and having satisfied his curiosity, turns away from it with an air of disdain, cursing the meanness of those who trample under foot their dignity thus to mingle with the vulgar herd. But he that has learned to form a just estimate of dignity, views the scene with rapture, casts away the silly baubles with which prejudice bedecks her votaries, and hastens to join the assembly, that he also may rank in "the highest stile of man."

Would we wish to complete our survey of Christian politics, in order to determine which way Christianity inclines, we must take a view of the political character of Jesus Christ himself, the great author of the system. His entrance into our world, though attended with acclamations of heaven, was followed with the frowns of a court, and the enraged blast of a tyrant's poisonous breath. When he returned from the early exile into which the storm of despotism had driven him, still haunted by the same tyrannical influence, he was forced to turn aside to the country from which he afterwards received the opprobrious name of a Nazarene. The station which he chose in life, was not that of grandeur, still more to swell the inflated breast of pride, and perpetuate the tyranny of the great; no, he chose to rank with the industrious mechanic, to elevate the poor from that debasement into which they had been unjustly thrown, and for ever after to ennoble honest industry. When, in pursuance of the great objects of his mission, he began to instruct and heal mankind, he asked neither Priests nor Kings to sign his commission; at which the Scribes and Pharisees being enraged, haughtily demanded, "By what authority doest thou these things?" but he disdained to satisfy their officious inquiry. In travelling to dispense the words of wisdom, and to perform the works of mercy, it was through the lower walks of life he passed, that the poor might feel the salutary influence of his doctrine and miracles. Though he refused not to stretch forth his healing hand over more exalted patients, yet they must submit to the same terms with the meanest; a Centurion must come and ask him as well as a beggar. He paid no court to Kings; for while Herod for a long time desired to see him, Jesus refused to wait upon him; and for his contemptible duplicity, he stigmatized him with the appropriate name of a fox. He strenuously set himself against the abuses of his time, although they were the abuses of men in power. From the day that his holy zeal purified the temple of Jehovah, we have seen trading Priests, who
make

make a gain of godliness, branded on the forehead with the name of *thieves*.

But this inflexible Reformer could not long be suffered to walk at large. The rude arm of violence soon seized him, under the double pretext of having offended against Church and State: like righteous Naboth, charged with blaspheming God and the King. The apprehending of him was the work of wicked priests, yet they craftily shunned the odium of it, by delivering him up to the civil power; and thus made the Romans the tools of their infernal purposes. Though now we behold Jesus as an arraigned criminal, yet we cannot discover in him the smallest relaxation from his usual firmness and dignity; he refuses to answer all the useless questions of the Roman Governor, and flatly charges the priests, his accusers, with their own crime. We find that in those days jarring despots could coalesce to sacrifice reformers; for Pilate and Herod, who were before at variance, were made friends by joining together in the unjust treatment of Jesus. Pilate, at a loss to know how to decide upon the accusation of Christ, sends him bound to Herod; and Herod, when he found that Jesus would neither offer incense to his intolerable pride, nor work miracles to satisfy his vain curiosity, insulted him by arraying him with the mock insignia of royalty, and sends him back to Pilate.

Now the whole body of Chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, excite the people to join with them in raising against Christ the cry of *sedition*,---“He stirreth up the people;” they add to it the charge of *treason*---“He is an enemy to “Cæsar.” This last accusation decided the affair; for he that is not Cæsar’s friend, however righteous, must fall Cæsar’s victim. The Priesthood triumphs. Jesus is crucified. And those very men who should have taught the people, from the dictates of religion, not to insult over a suffering criminal, themselves join with the crowd in loading him with reproaches; saying, “Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it up in three days, save thyself, and “come down from the cross: he saved others, himself he “cannot save.” Thus died Jesus Christ the righteous---Religion’s friend, but the priest’s enemy; a blessing to the people, though an offence to the rulers. In his life, though he stopped not to weave a garland to adorn the temple of Liberty, yet we observe him smile upon it as he passes. At his death, he looks down from the cross, and by his frown for ever shrouds in infamy the gloomy castles of superstition and tyranny.

Thus

Thus from a close examination of the sacred volume, we affirm, that while it does not absolutely prescribe any particular form of Civil Government, but leaves it to our choice, it insists that justice be the firm foundation, whatever may be the form of the superstructure; it teaches us to esteem and exalt men for virtues, and not for wealth, and thus raises the poor to a level with the rich; it encourages free discussion upon the principles and practice of administration: it casts contempt upon a bigotted attachment to precedent; it recommends simplicity in the mode of Government, and is unfavourable to the establishment of an individual as the supreme head of a community.

From the whole we conclude, "That the Scriptures incline strongly in favour of a well-ordered DEMOCRACY.

Learn then, ye despisers of revelation, who pride yourselves on an attachment to the noble cause of Liberty, no longer to reproach the scripture as the book of Gothic superstruction, the supporter and shield of priestcraft and kingcraft. Ye may reply, "We have been taught to conceive thus of it" by the men who are appointed to enforce its doctrines, "since they are continually thundering out their anathemas" against all who refuse to render unto Cæsar the things that "are Cæsar's." But had ye acted upon your own avowed principles, ye would have said, "This is but the interpretation of a hireling priest, what reason have I to depend upon it? I will search the scriptures for myself, and know what really are its political doctrines." But no; for once ye will take the word of a priest. Permit me to ask, Why so little candour towards the Bible? Can it be because ye think the Bible is uncandid towards you, in condemning, without distinction, all your favourite vices? Had ye searched carefully the sacred volume, ye might have stored your quiver with many a piercing arrow against opposing Kings and Priests. Ignorant of the real dictates of scripture, and unacquainted with the true spirit of Christianity, ye are fighting against ye know not what. Ye little suspect, that to the torch of Revelation ye are indebted to that blaze of light which now surrounds you, and in which ye so justly exult. But had ye turned your eyes to the historic page, ye would have found that it was when the Bible lay chained to the gratings of a monastery, that ignorance spread abroad her gloomy veil, and tyranny stretched out its iron sceptre over an enslaved world. Ye would have seen and confessed, that the scriptures, emerg-

ing from the cloister, was, like the bright luminary of day, rising from the chambers of the east. The Protestant reformers ye would have revered as the first champions and apostles of freedom. And, if with an impartial eye ye had examined it, ye would have acknowledged, that the system of Church Government, framed by John Calvin, was the first and purest system of representative Democracy with which the world was ever blessed. Know then, that Christianity so far from being afraid to meet, is herself the author of the age of reason. She is not, as ye imagine, kept alive by the fostering hand of an establishment; no, she droops and sickens while subjected to a state connection. When, by divine aid, her health is restored and invigorated, with indignant force she shall burst these bonds, and mounting her chariot of light, will drive with rapid course to the most distant lands; and never stop till she has illuminated every dark recess of the spacious globe. The owl-eyed despot shall recede with trembling from her piercing rays, while the glowing patriot shall, exulting, hail the joyful day, and celebrate in one grand festival, the triumphs of Reason, of Freedom, and of the Christian Revelation. Animated by the precepts of the Gospel, the sons of men shall execrate the fields of blood: and, resolved to learn the cursed art of war no more, they will meet together to destroy its instruments; turning their attention to the peaceful employments of rural life, "They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice-den. They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

F I N I S.

